THE

Elders, Miniſters & Meſſengers

OF THE SEVERAL

BAPTIST CHURCHES,

MEETING AT

Falmouth	*Yeovil*	*Malmſbury*
Chacewater	*Broadmead* and	*Croſcomb*
Exon	*Pithay* Briſtol	*Frome*
Upottery	*Horſly*	*Crockerton* and
Wellington	*Grittleton* and	*Sarum.*
Loughwood		

Having received LETTERS alſo from

Plymouth	*Stokegomer*	*Cheltenham*
Tiverton	*Bicknell*	*Paulton*
Kingſbridge	*Chard*	*Calne*
Cullumpton	*Lyme*	*Melkſham*
Preſcott	*Horſington*	*Bradford* and
Bampton	*Wotton*	*Bratton*

Being met in Aſſociation at *Sarum*, *Wilts*, *May* 22 and 23, 1782. To the ſeveral Churches they repreſent, ſend Chriſtian Salutation.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

ACTUATED, we truſt, by a ſacred zeal for the glory of God and a tender concern for your eternal intereſt, we have again met according to our annual cuſtom, to receive an account of your various ſtates, to unite in our ſupplications for your univerſal proſperity, and to ſend to you ſuch intelligence and advice as we deem ſuitable, as well as to animate one another in our miniſterial labors.

As men, as chriſtians, and as goſpel miniſters, our exerciſes, griefs and diſcouragements are numerous and great; and the contents of your letters this year have rather increaſed than leſſened the torrent of our ſorrow.

ſorrow. Yes! we wept, when we remembred Zion. The death of uſeful members, and the moral death of uſeleſs ones,—the languor, barrenneſs and ſad imperfections of others,—the declining ſtate of ſome of the churches,—the little ſucceſs of the goſpel in moſt,—and the various afflictions of all, have deeply affected our trembling hearts. The ſpread of infidelity and ungodlineſs in the land, the various diſtreſſes which a war, procured by our ſin and folly, hath brought upon our nation, and the very unſeaſonable weather that ſeems to threaten us with awful conſequences, ſerve greatly to heighten our gloom. May not the pleaſant hill of Zion, may not this once delightful iſle, be now termed "The Vale of Tears?" But God is juſt in all his ways, and our calamities are the fruit of our own ſins: O, join with us, brethren, in lamenting our ſins, and in ſpreading our calamities, before the throne of grace! And let us take heed that we do not provoke the Lord to withdraw his preſence from us, and to withhold the ſpirit of prayer from his churches, and a bleſſing from the miniſtry of his word, as well as peace and proſperity from our diſtreſſed nation.

But while we thus lament our moral and natural evils both in church and ſtate, we would not forget the manifold and tender mercies of our God, which are matter of thankfulneſs and ſprings of conſolation.—Melancholy as the aſpect of the ſtate of religion is, our churches are in peace,—continue ſtedfaſt in the faith,—and the number of their members is rather increaſed. The ſpread of religious liberty in ſeveral parts of Europe is likewiſe matter of joy and thankſgiving; may it prove to be the dawn of the latter-day glory! The late ſucceſs which has attended our arms alſo, induces us to hope that a proſpect of peace may ſpeedily be opened, and that we ſhall yet be a ſaved and proſperous nation.

But, turning our eyes from all earthly and temporal objects, permit us, dear brethren, to addreſs you upon thoſe infinitely important ſubjects which concern your ſpiritual and eternal intereſt. You profeſs yourſelves to be the worſhippers of the true God, the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, the purchaſe of his atoning blood,

blood, the temples of the Holy Ghoſt, and expectants of eternal glory: What manner of perſons ought ye to be! how holy! how thankful! how ſpiritual! how heavenly! Permit us to tell you that it is our higheſt ambition to further you in the paths of truth and peace in this world, and to preſent you faultleſs and joyful before the throne of God and the Lamb. You believe that you are by nature guilty and helpleſs ſinners, and hope that you are by ſovereign and rich grace, pardoned and ſaved; O how ſhould you deteſt ſin, as infinitely offenſive to God, and unutterably injurious to yourſelves! How ſhould you prize the bleſſed goſpel of your ſalvation! How ſhould you admire and adore diſtinguiſhing mercy! How ſhould you love and obey your compaſſionate Redeemer! How ſhould you count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge and enjoyment of Chriſt! How ſhould you ſhine with his holy image! How ſhould you burn with zeal for his glory! And how ſhould you triumph in his mighty name! Yea! how ſhould you follow him within the veil, ſet your affections on things above, and firmly graſp eternal realities!—— We are pained, we are pained at heart, when we perceive in any of you a ſpirit of ſupineneſs and indifference, of pride, carnality, worldly-mindedneſs, and abominable conformity to the children of darkneſs. You, chriſtians! are natives of another world, and ſojourners and ſtrangers on the earth; your treaſure and inheritance, your life and felicity are in heaven; there you hope, ere long, to reſt from all your labors and griefs,—to behold the face of God,—to join in everlaſting anthems to the Lamb that was ſlain,—and to ſhine as the ſtars for ever and ever.——O therefore, let your belief of divine truths be unwavering, and your confidence in the Lord immoveable; let your hope be active and vigorous; let your reverence of God be profound and uniform; let your love and eſteem of Chriſt be boundleſs; let your humility be real and unfeigned; let your patience and reſignation be firm and conſtant; let your thankſgivings be fragrant and perpetual as the holy incenſe in the ancient temple; let your temper be benevolent, and your deportment courteous; let the frame of your mind be even and ſerene; let your obe-

dience

dience be evangelical, universal, and regular; and let your conversation shine with purity and prudence. Be much with God in meditation and secret prayer, and ever set his awful and glorious perfections before you; keep a strict watch over your hearts, words and actions; and frequently scrutinize your inmost souls. Moreover, we exhort you conscientiously to attend the private and publick means of grace; revere the Lord's day, as his own sacred time, suppressing, as much as may be, all vain and worldly thoughts in yourselves, and discountenancing all vain and worldly discourse in others; regularly discharge the duties of your various stations; and aim still at a greater degree of the spirit, power and pleasure of religion.

We also beseech you, brethren, as we regard the credit of your christian character, the peace and happiness of your own souls, and the interest and glory of the blessed Redeemer, to be *stedfast and uniform* in your religious deportment, temper and spirit, and not unstable in your sentiments, irregular in your conduct, and fickle in your frames: There are the same reasons why you should be *always* holy in heart and life, as at certain seasons and on some occasions: God and his word are unchangeably the same; sin and holiness are immutable in their nature, and the obligations you are under to Jesus Christ are ever increasing. Be ye, therefore, stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and your labor will not be in vain, as in so doing you will be the more established in the ways of godliness, the more able to resist temptations, the more constantly happy in your own minds, the more useful in the church of God, and the more ready to meet death. He is not the most happy nor the most honourable christian who is one moment at the gate of heaven, and the next moment at the gate of hell; that is one day an ardent flame, and the next day a marble statue; that is one week a flowing stream, and the next week a rock of ice.——Sorry shall we be to be informed at out next annual meeting, that some whom we now address, solemnly address in the name of the great God, are backslidden and apostatized from the ways of religion! O beware of backsliding in heart, and of enthusiasm and errors in judgment and practice.

We

We earneſtly and affectionately exhort you, alſo, who have forſaken the Lord and his people to conſider your ways, the aggravations of your guilt, and the dreadful tendency and end of your horrid conduct. Glad ſhall we be to ſee you return with weeping and ſupplication to the biſhop of ſouls and the goſpel fold.

Permit us, likewiſe, to addreſs you who attend on our miniſtry, but decline a ſubmiſſion to the yoke of Chriſt. We travail in birth till Chriſt be formed in your hearts; we pray, we long for your ſalvation; and will any of you remain unconcerned for your own ſouls, and the advancement of the glory of God? Or can you, think ye, be real and conſiſtent chriſtians, and not take up your croſs, and follow the Captain of ſalvation? Can you believe in Chriſt for eternal life, and withhold your obedience to his divine commands? And muſt it not be owing either to your ſad indifference, or elſe to your groundleſs fears, that you do not readily enliſt under the Redeemer's banner? O reſt not, till you can ſay, "We will go with you, for we have heard, we have ſeen, that the Lord is with you."

You, brethren, who may be diſtreſſed with deſponding fears, we adviſe to ſeek immediate relief not from your duties, feelings and frames, (tho' theſe, if truly ſpiritual, you ought to conſider as fruits and evidences of a ſaving change) but from the fullneſs and freeneſs of divine grace, by an entire reliance on Chriſt alone, who abundantly encourages all who are weary and heavy laden to come unto him for ſpiritual reſt. Believe, therefore, in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and you ſhall be ſaved; nor can you ever expect any true and living conſolation, but by a true and living faith in the Son of God.

Finally, brethren, we commit you all in the ſpirit of fervent prayer, to the compaſſionate Shepherd of Iſrael, in hope of meeting you at length among the glorious and innumerable multitude on mount Zion,

And remain your affectionate brethren in our exalted Lord.

Sign'd, by order and on behalf of the Aſſembly, by the Moderator. } JOHN TOMMAS.

BREVIATES.

SARUM, *May* 22, 1782.

WEDNESDAY afternoon, three o'Clock. Miniſters, Meſſengers, &c. met at the Meeting-Houſe according to appointment. Mr. *S. Evans* began in prayer. The Preliminaries of the Aſſociation were read. Mr. *Tommas* was choſen MODERATOR. The letters from the Churches were read, minutes taken, and Mr. *B. Francis* was requeſted to prepare a circular letter. Mr. *Stradling* clos'd this meeting in prayer at ſix.

HALF PAST SIX met again. Sang a ſuitable Hymn. Mr. *T. Dunſcombe* prayed. Mr. *Day* preached from 1 Pet. v. 6. *Humble yourſelves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* Sang again, and then clos'd in prayer at eight.

THURSDAY Morning ſix o'clock. Meſſrs. *Dyer, Cole, Horſey, Rippon,* Senr. *Moſely,* and *Redding* engaged in prayer. Adjourned at half paſt eight o'clock.

TEN o'clock. Began the public worſhip by ſinging. Mr. *E. Francis,* and Mr. *Kingdon,* prayed. Mr. *Tommas* preached from Jer. xiv. 8. *O the hope of Iſrael, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why ſhouldeſt thou be as a ſtranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aſide to tarry for a night?* Sang a hymn. Read the circular letter. Mr. *Day* clos'd in prayer at one o'clock.

THREE o'clock. Mr. *B. Francis* prayed. Sang a hymn. Mr. *Evans,* of Briſtol, preached from Rom. i. 16. *I am not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, for it is the power of God unto ſalvation to every one that believeth.* Sang a hymn. Mr. *Clark,* of Unicorn-Yard, London, clos'd the meeting in prayer, and diſmiſſed the public aſſembly at half paſt five.

The Miniſters and Meſſengers ſtayed to attend the further buſineſs of the Aſſociation.

Ap-

Approv'd the circular letter, and desir'd the *Moderator* to sign it on behalf of the Assembly.

Audited and approv'd the accounts of the Association Fund, and desir'd the *Moderator* to attest them accordingly.

The Collections sent in to this little fund this year amounted to 32l. 19s. 9d.½. Voted several sums out of this fund for village preaching and various other important purposes.

AGREED, To observe a day of fasting and prayer as soon as convenient to the several Churches, on account of the present unpromising appearance of the weather, the low state of religion, and the continuance of the dreadful calamity of war.

AGREED, That we and those we represent are ready in every way we lawfully can, faithfully and zealously to serve our King and Country, and if necessary to take arms in their defence. But that the propos'd Scheme of exercising the people on the Lord's Day, except in case of actual invasion, it appears to us, will be, if carried into execution, a gross profanation of the Sabbath, and in its consequences highly injurious to the morals of the people which are too much relaxed already. That we cannot therefore, in conscience, comply with this scheme, and hope we shall not be call'd to it.

AGREED, That a representation of our sentiments upon this subject be made to those in power, if it should hereafter appear necessary.

AGREED, To hold the next association at Tiverton, Wednesday and Thursday in the Whitsun-Week. To begin on Wednesday, at Three in the Afternoon precisely. Mr. *B. Francis*, and Mr. *Newton*, to preach the Sermons. The *Moderator* concluded in prayer.

In

In the aſſociated Churches the laſt year, there were

Baptized	-	61
Received by letter	-	9
		70
Dead	- -	54
Diſmiſſed	- -	1
Excluded	- -	7
		62
Increaſe	- -	8

This Day is publiſhed,

Price SIX-PENCE,

ELISHA'S EXCLAMATION,

A SERMON occaſioned by the Death of

The Rev. HUGH EVANS, M. A.

Who departed this Life, March 28, 1781.

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THE Elders, Miniſters and Meſſengers OF THE SEVERAL BAPTIST CHURCHES, MEETING AT

Falmouth,
Chacewater,
Tiverton,
Wellington,
Bicknell,
Preſcott,
Paulton,
Broadmead and *Pithay*, Briſtol.
Sodbury,
Wotton,
Horſley,
Cheltenham,
Sarum,
Bratton,
Crockerton,
Frome,
Bradford,
Grittleton and *Calne*.

Having received LETTERS alſo from

Plymouth,
Kingſbridge,
Exon,
Cullumpton,
Bampton,
Stoke-gomer,
Upottery,
Chard,
Loughwood,
Lyme,
Yeovil,
Bridgewater,
Horſington, and
Melkſham.

Being met in Aſſociation at *Calne*, *Wilts*, *June* 2d and 3d, 1784. To the ſeveral Churches they repreſent, ſend Chriſtian Salutation.

DEAR BRETHREN,

TO ſtrengthen each others hands in the work of the Lord, promote your ſpiritual intereſt which is dear to us, and advance the honor of our Redeemer, we have held another annual aſſembly; and truſt in the enjoyment of the divine preſence and bleſſing, we can ſay it is good for us that we have been here. With the moſt humble and affectionate concern for your greateſt happineſs, we beg leave to offer, and beſeech you in the ſpirit of meekneſs, once more to accept a word of exhortation.

You do well brethren; to remember, as long as you continue in the preſent life, that you remain in a ſtate of great weakneſs and imperfection, in a world of temptation and wickedneſs. That therefore, the moſt vigorous and conſtant exertion of your graces, in the aſſiſtance and ſtrength of Chriſt